

VZCZCXRO0574  
OO RUEHROV  
DE RUEHJM #0475/01 0751312  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 161312Z MAR 09  
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4386  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEADWD/DA WASHINGTON DC//DAS-ZD/DACS-ZK//  
RUEAHQA/CSAF WASHINGTON DC//POLAD//  
RHMFIUU/CMC WASHINGTON DC  
RUENAAA/CNO WASHINGTON DC//POLAD//  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 7585  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4570  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 4418  
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 5912  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 4334  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2908

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 JERUSALEM 000475

SIPDIS

STATE PASS BBG  
STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD  
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC  
CMC WASHINGTON DC FOR POLAD

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON FOR HKANONA AND POL - TSOU  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAO](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (03/16): "WAITING FOR AGREEMENT"

-----  
Main Stories:  
-----

All front pages continue weekend coverage of Palestinian "dialogue for reconciliation" in Cairo. Papers report that some dialogue committees have achieved progress, noting that the elections committee has agreed to simultaneous Palestinian Authority legislative, presidential, and PLO National Council elections by January 25, 2010. The papers vary in their predictions of the parties' chances in reaching an agreement on most issues.

Al Quds leads with news about the prisoners' exchange between Hamas and Israel. The paper reveals that Egypt has invited Hamas Chief Khaled Misha'al to come to Cairo, possibly to make a final decision on the deal. The report receives front page coverage in all papers, with Al Ayyam noting that Israeli envoys have failed to finalize the deal because of Israeli demands to "deport" certain Palestinian prisoners outside of the Palestinian Territories and release some West Bank prisoners to the Gaza Strip. The paper notes that the Israeli cabinet has postponed a meeting to make a final decision on the deal until March 17.

Al Quds and Al Hayat Al Jadida run extensive front page and inside coverage of the March 15 opening of the Jericho training facility for Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces. Al Ayyam runs half page inside coverage. Reporting notes that Assistant Secretary of State David Johnson, along with many foreign consuls and military attaches listened to PA Premier Fayyad as he thanked the U.S. Government for its support in establishing the training facility and noted that security is the basis for statehood and called for internal Palestinian unity. Assistant Secretary of State Johnson remarked that the new facility is another success story of cooperation between the U.S. and the Palestinian Authority in the security sector. He recalled other examples of Palestinian security sector success such as activities in Nablus, Janin and Hebron.

Al Quds and Al Ayyam's front pages cover a March 15 conference in Jerusalem hosted by the Civic Coalition to Defend Palestinian Rights (Tal Quds) to highlight Israeli plans to demolish 1,700 Palestinian houses in Jerusalem and displace 17,000 Palestinians, according to reporting. In related news, Al Ayyam's front page and inside Al Quds, run a report that "extremist Jews" stormed a Palestinian house in East Jerusalem's Yemeni neighborhood in Silwan, near the Al Aqsa mosque.

Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida front page and Al Quds reports inside on comments by Palestinian Authority Presidential Spokesman Abu Rudaynah responding to Israeli Premier Olmert's claims that he has never received a serious offer from the Palestinians regarding a peace settlement. Olmert is quoted by the papers accusing Palestinians of lacking courage.

Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page and an inside page of Al Quds reports on a "limited-circulation classified" CIA report that predicts the end of a Jewish-majority Israel within the next 20 years. The report sees diminishing chances for the two-state solution against growing chances of a one state solution. The report also expects the return of Palestinian refugees, which it notes is the basis for a lasting peace. The report also expects more American Jews to immigrate to Israel.

Al Quds runs an inside report that continues front page reporting in all dailies of the recent meeting by British legislators with Hamas officials in Lebanon. Al Quds writes that former U.S. officials are now urging President Obama to begin dialogue with Hamas and explore if Hamas is ready to renounce violence and engage in peace talks. Reporting highlights that an economic advisor to President Obama is

JERUSALEM 00000475 002 OF 003

among the signatories to a letter urging Obama to engage with Hamas.

Al Ayyam's front page, also inside Al Quds, cites an AFP report about an open letter published by international judges and prosecutors calling for international investigations into human rights violations committed during the Gaza conflict.

-----  
WEEKEND STORIES  
-----

Sunday, March 15

All front pages run statements from March 13 by Palestinian Authority President Abbas. Abbas stressed the messages, "We want unity and a government that will not bring a return of the siege and is capable of dealing with Arabs and the world." In regards to his position on a new Israeli government, Abbas said that he will refrain from comment until a new government is formed, but that any Israeli government should, "endorse the two state solution, halt settlement activities and remove checkpoints."

Al Ayyam front pages the headline, "British Consul General: Demolition of houses in the occupied territory violates international law and casts doubts on Israel's commitment to peace." British CG Makepeace said in a letter addressed to the residents of the East Jerusalem Al Bustan neighborhood that the demolition of houses in an occupied territory is a matter that directly contradicts article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Israel's obligations to the Road Map Plan.

Saturday, March 14

"Fayyad reveals the existence of a European paper for peace and reiterates: The question of the [future] government is in the hands of the President. I have no intention of undertaking any official duties in the Palestinian Authority," according to front page headlines in all dailies. Fayyad noted that Palestinians want the European Union to be an active player in negotiations and not just a good donor. According to Fayyad, "the paper conveys a European view to President Obama."

Al Quds and Al Ayyam front paged reports of 9 wounded, including an American citizen, in the weekly protests against the Israeli separation barrier in the West Bank villages of Bil'in, Ni'lin, Al Ma'sara and Burin. Scores of protestors also suffered from suffocation as a result of tear gas fired by Israeli military reporting noted. The protest in Burin was against alleged Israeli

confiscation of land, the story adds.

-----  
BLOCK QUOTES:  
-----

1) Independent daily Al Quds' editorial is titled, "Waiting for Agreement"(03/16): "In these difficult circumstances, suffered by our people because of the occupation and all its practices, stands and designs, the most comforting thing to our people, and the strongest instrument to deal a blow to those violating our national rights, would come from a comprehensive [reconciliation] agreement. It would place us, once again, on the right path to freedom from occupation and establishing an independent state on our national soil."

2) Basim Abu Sumaya comments, in official daily Al Hayat Al Jadida, under the title, "The taste of breakthrough"(03/16): "The [Hamas]coup, division, contradictory efforts and separation [of West Bank and Gaza] have exhausted us. Moreover... regional and

JERUSALEM 00000475 003 OF 003

international players, Arabs and others, have tarnished our name."

WALLES